

Recalling and reliving these events is difficult at any stage of trauma recovery. It pains me that seven years into my retirement, I am before the Senate telling my story that started 30 years ago. After serving 22 years on active duty with the United States Coast Guard, my testimony will give brief recollections of mine and other's traumas. It is my hope that I and this panel will be the last to publicly be re-traumatized from our time in the Coast Guard. A Coast Guard we all still love and bleed blue for. We all stand united, Academy Cadets, enlisted, officers, and retirees, we want to make our Coast Guard the best it can be. I am Tina D. Owen and this is our story.

At the young age of 17, off to college I went but quickly being reminded that I didn't get the anticipated sports scholarship, and I was working three jobs while going to classes. My college counselor said I needed a plan because staying at college wasn't going to work. I discovered the Coast Guard in a magazine article and made the call.... G.I. Bill, driving boats, drug interdiction, sign me up! You need a parent's signature at 17, my recruiter advised, and not having the best home life, that wasn't an option, so he had me come in to do the paperwork when I turned 18 and off to boot camp I went a month later! I told the recruiter I would see him after boot camp and that I couldn't wait to be driving the boats and becoming a Boatswain's Mate.

During boot camp, I visited the medical clinic because of stomach pains I was having. The doctor ordered a series of x-rays to help determine the cause of my pain. While in the x-ray room the Health Service Technician had me undressed completely with the gown open in front. I will stop there with how the rest of the story goes. I returned to training and didn't tell anyone what happened because I didn't have another plan, the Coast Guard was my plan and I wanted to be a part of this organization.

Off to Governor's Island I go after boot camp and although I wasn't driving boats yet, my Chief allowed me to go on the 378' cutter that was tied up just across the street from our shop. I was well on my way to being a Boatswain's Mate (BM) until the new Chief shows up for duty. He announced that he was a Fire Control Technician, had never worked with women and didn't want to work with women. When I asked him to sign off on my chit to be put on the BM 'A' school list, he refused to sign it and said no woman was going to be a BM in his Coast Guard. He gave me the choice of Storekeeper, Yeoman, or Health Service Technician. Woman had been in the Coast Guard for 20 years at this point and we were indeed allowed to do all jobs. Again, not having a plan outside of the CG, I submitted to putting my name on the Health Service Technician (HS) list. This same Chief would ask the women while we were at lunch, who in the galley were we sleeping with. I eventually got a mutual transfer to VA and a wonderful Chief at the new unit had the FTC investigated and I was promised I would never have to serve near him again, and I never did.

Upon graduating from HS 'A' school, I get stationed at the Cape May clinic. During my rotation in the radiology department, I expressed to the Chief that I was concerned I may be having an allergic reaction to the dyes we used to process the films because every time I worked in the space, I was having difficulty breathing. He asked me if I had x-rays while at boot camp and I replied, Yes. He pulled my file and said, oh you were one of HS1's victims, don't worry he is in the brig so you can just be over it. My first panic attacks began that moment as all of the inappropriateness of his x-rays came flooding back. I was able to express how the Chief's comments affected me years later and the Chief wrote me an apology letter for his actions. I also asked the assignment officer years later if he knew about the HS1 going to the brig for taking hundreds of inappropriate x-rays and he was not aware of the incidents and assured me he wouldn't have sent me to that clinic if he would have known.

While serving at the clinic, I was selected as the female HS to go onboard the CGC Eagle, where boot camp was held for six weeks out to sea. During this time I was having some health issues that we coordinated care in South America. After being seen by the doctor, it was determined that I was possibly having a miscarriage due to the amount of blood loss. I requested to be medivac back home and was denied by the physician that was onboard and he demanded I continue doing my job and if I didn't he was going to medically discharge me for mental health issues when we got back to Cape May. Upon return to the clinic, I began therapy and the physician was transferred to another unit.

Becoming an HS was a blessing in disguise as I was always in a position to allow people to have a safe space to talk, to confide in someone, to know they were being heard even though they couldn't tell anyone else. When I was named Enlisted Person of the Year for the 5th District, I was also endorsed to attend Officer Candidate School. I thought for sure I could make a difference as an officer.

Inducted as one of the first five women that formed the Coast Guard Women's Leadership Association, this is where I realized there wasn't much of a cultural difference from the enlisted to officer side, so survival mode is what I went into. After leaving headquarters and the original Women's Leadership group, I had informal Women's Leadership groups for the duration of my 22 year career.

You were all heard! All of the women and men that confided in me as a Health Service Technician, Clinic Administrator, Work-Life Supervisor, or just as a shipmate, you were heard loud and clear and I am grateful to have been that safe space for you all. Senate members I am here to tell you they were raped, they were threatened, they were kicked, things thrown at them from across the room, hit by said objects, made a public mockery, they had inappropriate EKGs taken, they found hidden cameras in the bathroom, they discovered a drunk shipmate

crawling in female racks on the cutter and was groping them, they all just wanted to serve their Coast Guard in a safe space, but they were violated.

I leave you with one last incident that occurred while I was on terminal leave prior to retiring. On my front porch is where I sat as the Chief Warrant Officer read me my rights and advised me that I was under investigation for an inappropriate relationship with the Civil Rights Officer who was a Chief. The investigation found him guilty of making false statements about me and four other women on the base. False statements to his supervisor that he was meeting all of us ladies and had a relationship with us... of which he did NOT. An obvious stalker and predator, he was afforded the opportunity to either get stationed in Alaska or retire. Thankfully he retired but when asked for him to be charged with sexual harassment, I was advised it didn't meet the criteria.

Today I want us all to release these pains and ask Senate to take this matter to a safe space and allow victims to see actions verse words. I have received several different treatments with the Veteran's Administration hospital and private practices that have more holistic approaches to healing from PTSD. In addition to all the wonderful recommendations that were made by the first panel of survivors, I would ask that you take into consideration future laws that would allow ALL veterans with PTSD to have access to medical cannabis regardless of what state they live in.